United Nations S/PV.4485

Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4485th meeting

Wednesday, 6 March 2002, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Petersen	(Norway)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	China	Mr. Chen Xu
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Doutriaux
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Mexico	Ms. Lajous
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Harrison
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

The situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia

Report of the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea (S/2002/205).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

02-27493 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia

Report of the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea (S/2002/205)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Japan, the Netherlands and Spain, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Seyoum (Eritrea), Mr. Tessema (Ethiopia), Mr. Motomura (Japan), Mr. van den Berg (Netherlands) and Mr. Arias (Spain) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ole Peter Kolby, head of the Security Council mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Ole Peter Kolby, head of the Security Council mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia, to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations. Members of the Council have before them document S/2002/205, containing the report of the Security Council mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia from 21 to 25 February 2002.

I give the floor to Mr. Kolby, head of the Security Council mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Mr. Kolby: It is an honour for me to introduce the report of the recent Security Council mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia. Thanks to the efficiency of the Council and the Secretariat, the report has already been available for some days, and we should all have received a copy.

Before going into the more substantive aspects of the report, however, I would like to take this opportunity to express the sincere gratitude of all the members of the Council to the two countries and their leaders for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to the mission in Addis Ababa and Asmara, as well as during our visit in the field. Indeed, it was a great privilege for me to lead a mission under such positive and conducive circumstances in both countries.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express the mission's appreciation to the United Nations Mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE); the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Legwaila; and the Force Commander, Major General Cammaert, as well as the Secretariat branch, for effectively facilitating the logistics during the trip, allowing us to cover a lot of ground in three days and to experience UNMEE firsthand.

We also visited an internally displaced persons camp and areas affected by the war. The insights gained during the mission will be useful in the Council's further considerations of and support for the process.

Finally, I thank my fellow Council members for their constructive participation in the mission. That support, extended to my delegation throughout the mission, was exemplary. The fact that all members of the Council participated in the mission testifies to the importance being given by the international community to the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea. I am honoured to say that the report before the Council reflects a united Council, a Council committed to actively assist the parties in implementing the Algiers Agreements and to contribute to the completion of the peace process.

The mission revealed that the parties remain committed to the implementation of the Algiers Agreements. The meetings held with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in Addis Ababa and with President Isaias Afwerki in Asmara further underscored the parties' desire to work closely with the United Nations to this end.

On our side, the mission emphasized to the two leaders the commitment of the Security Council to fully play its role in this regard. The mission strongly commended the contributions to date by UNMEE in discharging its mandate and towards improving the situation of the people, especially in the Temporary Security Zone. The mission understood that quick-impact projects have been particularly helpful. The arrangements for such projects ought to be continued.

Our meetings in the two capitals were all convened in a very constructive spirit. The meetings with Prime Minister Zenawi and President Afwerki highlighted the progress made in the peace process to date and the upcoming final legal settlement of the border issue. The mission welcomed recent statements by both sides reaffirming that the decision by the Boundary Commission is final and binding. The mission commended both parties for having chosen to resolve their differences through an international conflict-solving mechanism. It also commended both parties for having given the United Nations such a central role in implementing the Boundary Commission's decision.

The mission emphasized that the implementation of the Boundary Commission's decision must commence immediately upon its announcement. The process should be expeditious and at the same time ensure that stability is maintained in all areas affected by the decision. The mission impressed upon the parties the need to work closely together with the United Nations in the implementation phase ahead and to refrain from any kind of unilateral action, which could have seriously destabilizing effects.

In accordance with article 14 of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, the security arrangements are to remain in effect. Accordingly, arrangements for the separation of forces, as achieved by the Temporary Security Zone, will continue to be of key importance. UNMEE must continue its important work in this regard until the demarcation has been completed.

It is of paramount importance that transfer of territory and civil authority, as well as population and troop movements, take place in an orderly manner under an agreed framework. The parties must cooperate constructively with the Special Representative, Ambassador Legwaila, and members of the Council to this end. A significant amount of good will on both sides will be necessary to avoid delaying the process. Together, we must firmly move the process forward and, hence, actively help the situation of people in affected areas.

To this end, demining will be critical. The mission understood both parties to be ready to move the demining forward, in cooperation with UNMEE, as a matter of utmost priority. The concrete follow-up in this regard will be critical for the process of demarcation. During the mission, we received a briefing by the UNMEE Mine Action Coordination Centre, which underlined the importance of the demining for the demarcation work as well as for the safety of the people. No efforts can be spared in this regard.

Concerning the outstanding operational issues, the parties reiterated to the mission their well-known positions. The mission strongly urged both parties to comply fully with their obligations under the Algiers Agreements to provide UNMEE with the working conditions it requires. At the same time, the mission urged both parties to look to the future in order to find constructive modalities for cooperation and coexistence on the basis of the Boundary Commission's decision.

The mission particularly highlighted the parties' obligation under international humanitarian law and under the Algiers Agreements to release and return without delay all prisoners of war and civilian detainees.

The mission also met with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Mr. Amara Essy, and with representatives of the diplomatic community, United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations and civil society in both countries. The mission was briefed on the humanitarian situation in both countries. The mission commended the integrated approach taken by United Nations agencies and international donors and non-governmental organizations in their efforts to alleviate the suffering and to promote the peace process.

The mission underlined the importance of a broad approach to confidence-building between the two countries. It acknowledged in that regard the recent progress in the dialogue among religious leaders and encouraged representatives of civil society in the two countries to pursue other initiatives to enhance mutual trust.

The mission visited the Mereb river bridge, on which I gave a brief speech. I indicated that a bridge between minds also needed to be developed for the two neighbouring countries to live in the prosperity that the people so much crave and deserve.

In the important period ahead, the OAU and the facilitators and witnesses of the Algiers Agreements are strongly encouraged actively to support the process and to stand firmly behind the efforts of the United Nations, in close cooperation with the parties.

In our consideration of the renewal of the mandate of UNMEE, later this month, we need to provide as much clarity with respect to the implementation phase as possible. We must clearly define the tasks ahead and the division of labour. However, as the Boundary Commission's decision will not be available at the time of the consideration of the mandate, the Council should stand ready to further consider how the United Nations can fully support the demarcation process in close cooperation with the parties once a decision is announced.

The President: On behalf of the Council, I should like to express gratitude and appreciation to all the members of the Security Council mission, which was very ably led by Ambassador Kolby, for the manner in which they discharged this important responsibility on the Council's behalf.

Ms. Lajous (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The recent Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea continued the Council's practice of assessing on the ground the situations that form part of its programme of work. We are gratified that all members of the Council participated in the mission, because this demonstrated their shared determination to send a message of support for the peace process between those two countries.

The high points of the mission were undoubtedly its meetings with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Mr. Meles Zenawi, and with the President of Eritrea, Mr. Isaias Afwerki. The constructive exchanges with both leaders strengthened the relationship between their countries and the United Nations. In particular, the meetings emphasized the positive contribution of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) in building confidence between the two parties.

The Security Council mission was successful because it met its goal: to assure the leaders of the two countries that the United Nations will continue to support them during the phase of implementing the forthcoming decision of the Boundary Commission.

It is our hope that the Ethiopian and Eritrean authorities will keep open channels of communication with UNMEE and with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in order to set up a system for cooperation, which will be indispensable in the implementation of that decision. We reiterate our conviction that the adoption of unilateral measures could affect the sense of trust that both parties must evince. We appeal to the guarantors, witnesses and facilitators of the Algiers Agreements for their support in this crucial phase of the peace process.

One of the clearest conclusions of the Security Council mission was that the international community needs to support both countries' demining efforts, especially during the physical demarcation of the borders. We hope that donors will contribute to the special United Nations trust fund to remove the antipersonnel mines that pose a serious threat to the peoples of Ethiopia and of Eritrea.

We want to convey our appreciation to the personnel of UNMEE for their effective efforts to coordinate with the agencies of the United Nations system and the non-governmental organizations that carry out projects to meet the humanitarian needs of the refugees and internally displaced persons in the Temporary Security Zone. Talks between members of the Security Council mission and representatives of such organizations enabled us to grasp the dimensions of their work and of the challenges that they daily face.

One pending task for the Security Council is to define an exit strategy for UNMEE once the physical demarcation of the borders is complete, taking special care to preserve the progress made in the gradual process of normalizing relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Here, in addition to the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and subregional organizations have a major role to play.

Let me conclude by thanking the Government of Norway and Ambassador Ole Peter Kolby for the support and leadership that made it possible for the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea to be a success.

The President: I thank the representative of Mexico for her kind words.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): The Council, Sir, is greatly honoured that this meeting is being personally chaired by the Foreign Minister of Norway, because this demonstrates your country's commitment to this issue and to other issues in the Horn of Africa. Certainly, we would like to begin by congratulating you on your initiative to launch the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea. I hope this demonstrates also that elected members can make a difference in the work of the Council. We also want to join our colleague from Mexico in congratulating Ambassador Kolby on the leadership he provided before, during and after the mission. We further thank the Government of Norway for the aircraft and logistical support that were provided us. We also want to thank the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and the Secretariat staff for their vital role in making arrangements for the visit.

I would also like at this juncture to pay special tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, and his team in UNMEE for their sterling work and for their tireless efforts in furthering the peace process. The one thing I learned when I travelled down there is that Ambassador Legwaila does not have a simple nine-to-five job. Indeed, he seems to be on the move all the time between the two countries and visiting all corners of the border. We have every confidence in Ambassador Legwaila and we fully support his work in Eritrea and Ethiopia. We believe that as the mandate of UNMEE is up for renewal — and I gather it is up for renewal very soon, on 15 March — it is important for the Council to give strong endorsement of and a clear mandate for its continued work.

We believe that the Security Council Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea was indeed timely. I can say this with some conviction because, before we left, I actually had some personal questions as to whether or not our timing was right, given the fact that the Boundary Commission's decision was postponed. But I thought, having returned from the visit, that indeed it was very useful because it actually sensitized Council members to the real dynamic and the situation on the ground in Ethiopia and Eritrea. I must confess that I have come back with a heightened sense of the complex challenges that we face in the coming weeks. Certainly the Security Council will face a real challenge in handling the issue of the decision of the Boundary Commission, and we hope that the Council will rise to the challenge. Next week, when we engage in our informal consultations on the subject, I hope that the Council members will seriously reflect on this issue.

The road to peace in Ethiopia and Eritrea has been long and difficult. That is why we believe that the leaders of both countries deserve tremendous commendation for their resolve and determination to move the peace process forward to forge a lasting peace. As Ambassador Kolby stressed earlier, when he presented his report: both parties remain committed to the Algiers Agreement. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has said that Ethiopia will continue to be engaged positively, while President Isaias Afwerki has affirmed that the implementation of agreements already signed should not pose serious problems. We welcome both of these public commitments to work constructively with UNMEE to implement the final and binding decision of the Boundary Commission in accordance with the Algiers Agreements, and we hope that our visit has in many ways strengthened the commitment of these leaders.

As the legal ruling on the boundary question will soon be announced, it is useful for us to look ahead to prepare for the next phase. While we note that the two countries may have differing perspectives on how to implement the boundary decision, this only underscores, in our view, the importance of both sides engaging with Ambassador Legwaila to work out a common understanding on the modalities for implementing delimitation and demarcation expeditiously. However, regardless of the detailed modalities, one key principle to emphasize — and I am glad Ambassador Kolby emphasized this in his report also — is that both parties should refrain from any unilateral or destabilizing actions in the run-up to and following the boundary decision.

At this point, I would like to make an observation about an apparent paradox in the situation that we face. On the one hand, there has been relatively good compliance — indeed, I would say very good compliance — with UNMEE in implementing the Algiers Agreements on the ground. But, on the other hand, there is also considerable uneasiness and, perhaps, some tension in the atmosphere. Evidently, the deep wounds and the hurt arising from two and one half years of conflict will take time to heal.

Nevertheless, we will call on the two countries and their leadership to make every effort to rise above the unhappy past and, as has been alluded to by both Governments, to look forward to a new chapter of coexistence in which they can focus on combating poverty and on socio-economic development for the benefit of their peoples.

In this regard, we would like to briefly draw attention to four critical aspects that we think are fundamental to promoting normalization and rehabilitation.

First, demining remains a top priority, as Ambassador Kolby has said, in order to create conditions for the safe return of internally displaced persons, as well as to allow affected areas to be restocked for traditional uses like agriculture and livestock-grazing. I think one of the most vivid memories we will take back from the visit is actually observing the education of young children on demining. To see the fields firsthand is a much more vivid educational experience than anything we can say in this room. We believe that the demining work is a very important part of UNMEE's work.

Secondly, it is important for both sides to carry out the release of the remaining prisoners of war and civilian detainees without preconditions and delay, as provided for under the Algiers Agreement.

Thirdly, effective demobilization needs to be carried out so that scarce resources can be channelled into national development and rehabilitation.

Fourthly, confidence-building measures should be encouraged in order to rebuild the links between civil society on both sides of the border. In this connection, we are encouraged by the recent meeting of religious leaders in Addis Ababa and Asmara, which represents a significant breakthrough in enhancing people-to-people contacts, and I am glad that Ambassador Kolby also arranged for us to meet the religious leaders on both sides. We certainly agree with a key point that Ambassador Kolby made when he spoke at the Mereb River Bridge: we now need to build bridges between minds on both sides.

At the same time, we also urge both countries to demonstrate flexibility and to cooperate with UNMEE on all the other outstanding issues contained in the statement of the President of the Security Council of 16 January 2002, including, firstly, ensuring freedom of movement for UNMEE; secondly, disclosure of information on militia and police units in the Temporary Security Zone; thirdly, resolution of the status-of-forces agreement; fourthly, the provision of specific mine information; and fifthly, establishing a direct air corridor between Asmara and Addis Ababa. If I may make a personal comment here, I find it very puzzling that we cannot get an agreement to establish a flight that goes in a straight line between Addis Ababa and Asmara. Our failure to achieve this is really quite surprising.

We hope that resolving these issues will help in promoting mutual confidence and demonstrating good faith in moving the peace process forward. Indeed, as both sides have actually complied with all the key issues of these Agreements, it will be even better testimony of their good will if they can cooperate in these few remaining areas that we have listed in the presidential statement.

Finally, let me emphasize the important role of the international community in supporting the two countries' steps to peace. Some members have pledged practical assistance in the form of demining and developmental programmes. Others, including the guarantors and facilitators of the Algiers peace process, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Security Council can provide credible political support. I agree with Ambassador Kolby that our meeting with the Secretary-General of the OAU, Amara Essy, was very important in this regard. Clearly, the subregion has suffered conflict and instability for far too long. Eritrea and Ethiopia are now at the threshold of a new chapter in their history and they deserve every bit of support and encouragement from the global community as they work with UNMEE towards a lasting peace.

The President. I thank the representative of Singapore for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are also grateful to Ambassador Peter Kolby for the report he has submitted to the Council and for his very skilful leadership of the Security Council mission in its trip to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The situation in the area of the conflict remains calm. This is a major achievement of the peace process. First, it reflects the good will of both parties, and it is also the result of the joint efforts of the Security Council, the Secretary-General, the leader and

members of the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea and the Organization of African Unity.

The Council mission to the area of the conflict contributed in a concrete manner to United Nations actions in this sphere. We support the recommendations of the mission and, together with other members of the Security Council, we are prepared to work constructively on their implementation.

The Russian Federation has consistently advocated a peaceful settlement of the territorial dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea on the basis of the principles of the United Nations Charter and in strict compliance with the norms of international law. We are very pleased that, during the mission's stay in the region, the leaders of both countries, Meles Zenawi and Isaias Afwerki, again confirmed their unfailing commitment to the peace agreements and their readiness to comply with the forthcoming decision of the independent Boundary Commission.

We believe that the future work of the Security Council should focus on ensuring favourable conditions for the implementation of measures on demarcation and delimitation of the border. It is important for both parties to the conflict to continue to follow the spirit and letter of the Algiers Agreements and not to undertake any unilateral acts that might jeopardize peace and security in the Horn of Africa.

An enormous responsibility rests on the shoulders of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), which has already undertaken serious efforts to maintain security. But it must do even more. It must work vigorously, and supervise the effectiveness of the separation of the armed forces of the parties in the Temporary Security Zone until the boundary demarcation measures have been fully implemented.

The actions taken to restore the climate of trust and good-neighbourliness between the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea, so badly affected by war, deserve our special encouragement. A beginning has been made, and we hope that efforts in this direction will continue.

The forthcoming verdict of the Boundary Commission is intended to remove the deep-rooted reason for the bloody conflict. It will be an important milestone in the settlement process. We call on the United Nations to provide all necessary assistance to the Boundary Commission, as well as all necessary resources through the fund set up by the Secretary-General.

Mr. Williamson (United States): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, in your capacity as the Norwegian Foreign Minister, for the strong interest that your country has shown in this issue and the critical role you have already played in advancing the peace process. I would also like to note at the outset my appreciation and debt to Ambassador Kolby for his leadership with respect to the mission, the report and this particular issue in general.

The Council mission travelled to Ethiopia and Eritrea to underscore the international community's support for the statesmanship that both Governments are demonstrating in resolving their border conflict through peaceful means. In particular, we travelled to the region to convey the Council's welcome for the public statements both Governments have made reaffirming that the Boundary Commission's decision is final and binding. With this early action to reaffirm their commitments to honour the Commission's decision, the groundwork has been laid for the two Governments, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and this Council to turn to the next stage in the peace process — the modalities of implementing the Commission's decision. I believe that that should be the focus of the Council's attention, and that is what I would like to focus on in my brief remarks today.

The report of the Council mission contains recommendations on the main issues relating to implementation. My delegation endorses those recommendations. There are two points I would like to make in the light of those recommendations in order to clarify United States thinking as the Council and the parties focus on implementation of the Commission decision.

First, the mission's discussions in both capitals only reaffirmed our view that the parties need to act quickly to work out the modalities of implementation. We do not doubt that both parties will carry out their commitments under the Algiers Agreements and that they are committed to maintaining peace. Unfortunately, we also do not doubt that the lack of direct communication and trust between the parties risks having a simple misunderstanding by one side spiral into a series of miscalculations that could lead to

a breakdown of this peace process. For that reason, both Governments need to fully engage with UNMEE to reach an understanding on the modalities of implementation.

In the ceasefire and Algiers Agreements, the parties laid down the basic principles to govern the post-implementation period, but the exact implementation procedures and responsibilities for implementation need to be worked out and confirmed. In the absence of confirmation on the exact sequence of steps during the implementation phase, the risks of miscalculation by either side remain high. We urge the parties to move forward now, without waiting for the Commission's decision to be announced, and to work with UNMEE on spelling out the procedures for implementation as soon as possible.

We also agree with the report's recommendation that the parties would benefit from having another parallel forum or interlocutor for discussion of broader implementation issues and problem-solving. The parties need to identify a third party or mechanism to which they can turn for direct mediation or good offices, as they work out implementation issues in coordination with UNMEE. This forum or third party could be the "911" the parties could call when they cannot reach agreement on an implementation issue, or when they need clarification of one side's action to avoid a spiral of counter-actions. As the mission's report suggests, this is a role that one or more of the friends of Ethiopia and Eritrea or the witnesses to the Algiers Agreements might play. We encourage the parties to consider this suggestion and, in coordination with UNMEE, to identify now an organization or third parties that could play that role during the next phase of the peace process.

Secondly, the United States remains concerned at the parties' lack of planning on how they will implement the demining required to complete border demarcation. As the mission notes in paragraph 21 of its report, under the Algiers Agreements the primary responsibility for demining lies with the parties. The United States Government envisioned that UNMEE would provide technical demining advice and training support to the parties. But we look to the parties to undertake, in line with their commitments, the actual demining needed for demarcation. In our view, the parties' original decision to carry out demining themselves was important, because their demining efforts would be valuable confidence-building measures. Having the parties engage in demining could create an environment of good faith as the implementation phase moves forward.

To help both sides prepare to carry out that demining responsibility, the United States Government has provided demining training and resources to both the Ethiopian and Eritrean Governments. In each country, an American contractor is currently overseeing two trained companies in surveying and demining.

Given that background, we are disappointed that during the mission we heard no evidence that either side is preparing plans for how they can carry out the needed demining. There has been inadequate consultation between the parties and UNMEE on the demining plans of the parties.

The United States Government supports the proposal contained in paragraph 35 of the mission's report that the Council request the Secretary-General to submit recommendations at an early stage on how to implement demarcation, including the necessary demining. In making his recommendations, the Secretary-General will need to consider the demining capacity of the parties, UNMEE's current demining capabilities and the political need for demarcation to be completed as expeditiously as possible. The Secretary-General will also need to consider the parties' existing commitment to carry out demining, the importance of the confidence-building contribution the parties carrying out demining can provide and the need to limit UNMEE's costs and size as much as possible.

We look forward to considering the Secretary-General's recommendations. Those recommendations will, by necessity, follow after the Commission's decision, in late March. In our view, after a technical rollover in UNMEE's current mandate this month, the Council should take up the issue of demining and the respective roles of the parties and UNMEE later this spring. The United States calls upon both parties to work with UNMEE in the interim to develop realistic plans for carrying out their demining commitments in the best way possible. The parties need to engage with UNMEE in good faith on this issue so that the Secretary-General will have all the information he needs in order to make useful recommendations.

Let me close by echoing the comments of others in thanking you, Mr. President, and your staff on the Norwegian delegation for orchestrating such a productive and successful mission. I also wish to thank

Ambassador Kolby for his effective leadership. Through you, Mr. President, let me also extend my warmest thanks to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations here in New York and to UNMEE on the ground for their work in planning our visit and making our arrangements. I was most impressed with the knowledge, dedication and patience of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations staff who travelled with us and of the UNMEE representatives with whom we met in each country. I also extend, through you, Mr. President, my appreciation to the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea for their hospitality during our visits and for their willingness to engage in frank discussions with us.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Chen Xu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to welcome you, Mr. President, as you chair this public meeting today.

Recently, the Security Council mission successfully visited Ethiopia and Eritrea and presented a report, thereby demonstrating the Council's firm support of and commitment to the peace process in Ethiopia and Eritrea. We would like to express our appreciation for the outstanding leadership of Ambassador Kolby and for the efforts of the Permanent Mission of Norway. I would also like to thank the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea for their warm hospitality, as well as the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) for the meticulous arrangements they made.

The peace process in Ethiopia and Eritrea is at a crucial stage. On the one hand, the border area — particularly the Temporary Security Zone — is basically calm. Both sides have reiterated that the decision of the Boundary Commission will be binding and final. Both sides have also agreed to have the United Nations play a central role in the implementation of the Boundary Commission's decision. On the whole, the situation is an encouraging one. That is a result of the efforts made by both sides in the peace process.

On the other hand, the Peace Agreement itself does not mean that peace will naturally appear. The specific modalities for implementing the decision still need to be determined. Issues such as demining, refugees and the release of prisoners of war still need to be resolved. In order genuinely to put aside past differences, increase confidence and dispel mistrust, it will be necessary for both sides to make further efforts. We hope that both countries can, in the interests of their peoples, scrupulously fulfil their commitments to accept the decision of the Boundary Commission in order to create favourable conditions for peace and the development of the two countries.

It also needs to be pointed out that while it might be easy to draw a boundary line on a piece of paper, it is much harder to physically demarcate that boundary on the ground. Like others, we hope that the two countries will, in a timely manner, reach agreement on specific modalities for implementing the decision. At the same time, they must demonstrate calm and restraint and maintain the security of the Temporary Security Zone, avoiding any unilateral actions that would negatively affect the peace process.

UNMEE has done a lot of work in maintaining tranquillity in the Temporary Security Zone and in easing tensions between the two countries. We wish to commend and support the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Joseph Legwaila, to move the peace process forward. In the current situation, it is even more necessary for the parties to the conflict to strengthen their cooperation with UNMEE through concrete actions. We also hope that UNMEE will continue its current efforts to play a positive role in the smooth implementation of the Boundary Commission's decision.

The Chinese delegation endorses the analysis and proposals made in the report of the visiting mission, including the proposal to extend UNMEE's mandate.

Consolidating the development of the peace process requires not only the joint efforts of the Governments of the two countries, but also cooperation between United Nations agencies and full cooperation between the United Nations, Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Organization of African Unity, humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations. We sincerely hope that the conflict will be resolved at an early date in order to inject new vitality into the momentum for resolving other conflicts on the African continent.

The President: I thank the representative of China for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is pleased to see you, Mr. President, presiding over this public meeting of the

Security Council on the situation in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Norway's contribution to conducting the Security Council's recent mission in those countries and to its success is incalculable. Well-deserved tribute should be paid to Ambassador Kolby for his great human qualities and for the tact, skill, flexibility, adroitness and spirit of circumspection with which he conducted the mission. Above all, tribute should be paid to him for his great ability to listen. Likewise, I wish to extend my congratulations to his entire team and to all the members of the Secretariat who participated in the mission and devoted themselves to its success.

The report that has just been presented to us by Ambassador Kolby, the observations and recommendations of which we support, illustrates the value and importance of the meetings held by the delegation. Above all, it underscores the importance and potential of this Security Council mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The mission took place a few weeks prior to the publication of the decision of the Boundary Commission, which is expected at the end of this month. The importance of that decision has become evident, but what is even more important for the future of the two countries is for them to accept and in good faith implement the Commission's decision. They committed themselves to doing so in the Algiers Peace Agreement, and their highest authorities reaffirmed this on the occasion of the mission's visit.

The international community expects the two countries to take, in a concerted manner, every necessary step to make it possible for the demarcation operations to be conducted rapidly. The international community expects them to refrain from any unilateral action that could re-ignite tensions. We encourage the two countries to elaborate confidence-building measures and fully to implement the provisions of the Algiers Agreement, in particular as regards the immediate release of prisoners of war and of all persons detained as a result of the conflict.

My delegation is gratified by the calm that has prevailed since the signing by the two countries on 18 June 2000 of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities and subsequently of the Algiers Peace Agreement. In this respect, we want to commend their leaders for having displayed restraint and for having opted for a peaceful settlement of their border dispute.

The role of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) in stabilizing the situation and in creating conditions conducive to the strengthening of the peace process has been, and remains, vital. In this respect, we wish warmly to congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, and all of the staff of UNMEE for their constructive and well-balanced approach to the task of fulfilling the mission's mandate and for their resolute commitment to working with the civilian population, which is the victim of the conflict.

Local United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations are also doing outstanding work in this context — work that deserves our full encouragement and that inspires respect. It is undeniable that UNMEE's fundamental role can only increase following the decision of the Boundary Commission, and therefore it seems vital that it be maintained as a guarantee of positive developments in future. That is why Cameroon strongly supports the renewal of UNMEE's mandate for a further six-month period. Naturally, that mandate should be adapted as necessary, so that UNMEE can provide the support expected of it for the demarcation process.

The role of the guarantors of the peace process, of the facilitators, of the friends of Ethiopia and Eritrea, and of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) is a crucial one. It is important that those entities, together with the parties, engage in an intensive dialogue, encouraging them to cooperate in good faith with UNMEE with a view to the implementation of the decision of the Boundary Commission, the full implementation of the Algiers Agreement, the development of confidence-building measures, and the normalization of relations between the two countries and the two parties.

The international community, and in particular the donor community, must rally now more than ever to strengthen the peace process. Consistent support for demarcation activities, for mine clearance, for the reintegration of displaced persons and refugees, and for the reconstruction and the economic and social recovery of the two countries is more necessary than ever.

This kind of support will, in any event, make it possible to make major progress in establishing a lasting peace in the region. The publication of the

decision by the Boundary Commission at the end of March will represent a decisive stage in the history of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Cameroon appeals urgently to the leaders and the peoples of those two fraternal countries to write a new chapter in the history of their relations. It is worth recalling that those relations must be relations of peace, of harmony, of fraternity and of shared prosperity — which they never should have ceased to be. Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea is necessary. This is a historical and geographical imperative. Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea is possible, and the recent meeting between the religious leaders of the two countries bears witness to this.

May the seeds that have now been sown germinate and bear fruit. Today more than ever the Ethiopians and the Eritreans, having learned well from the past, have the option of building the future with optimism. In this regard, and bearing in mind the profession of faith and hope of Antonio Machado, who said that the future is no more fixed than is the past, let me say that it is true: the future is not yet written. The building of a future of peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea cannot be the result of chance. Peace can come to that region of Africa only if all Ethiopians and all Eritreans agree to make peace and non-violence their primary ethical values — their motto for life. Peace can come about only if the Ethiopians and the Eritreans act together to transform the current situation, which is dominated by discord and violence, into a culture of peace, of solidarity and of development.

The President: I thank the representative of Cameroon for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to express its pleasure at seeing you, Sir, preside over this very important meeting of the Security Council. We also express our gratitude to your country for focusing the Council's attention, in an open format, on the current peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea. We particularly appreciate Norway's leadership in guiding the Council's work in that region. Since I myself had the honour of participating in the recent mission to those two countries, I can bear witness to the generous support received from your country and to the excellent work done by Ambassador Kolby and his team to make the mission the success that it was.

The Ambassador of Norway gave a very comprehensive briefing on the mission's visit to the capitals of Ethiopia and Eritrea and other regions in the two countries, with all of which my delegation fully agrees. That is why I do not wish to repeat any of his statement. I will confine myself to commenting on three aspects closely related to the observations and recommendations made by the mission.

My first comment relates to the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE). It is clear to our delegation that UNMEE is doing very positive work in the Temporary Security Zone between the two countries and in its delicate diplomatic task. Its presence should be maintained, first, so long as it enjoys the consent of the two parties and, secondly, until the conclusion of the border delimitation and demarcation process, in accordance with the provisions of the Algiers Agreements of June and December 2000. We believe that this presence will be all the more necessary during the sensitive border demarcation phase to follow the decision of the Boundary Commission late this month. We therefore urge the two countries to facilitate freedom of movement and to cooperate closely so that UNMEE may duly finish its work.

My second comment concerns the promotion of constructive dialogue between the two countries. The re-establishment of friendly relations and good-neighbourliness between Ethiopia and Eritrea is an objective that is in the interests of the two peoples and of the international community as a whole. Nonetheless, during our visit we noted that additional efforts are necessary if that goal is to be met. We therefore wish to join in the appeal to the friends of Ethiopia and Eritrea, the guarantors, the facilitators and the witnesses of the peace process to help promote a constructive dialogue between those two peoples. It is also for that reason that it is essential to insist on the appeal to the parties to refrain from taking any unilateral action counter to the spirit and scope of the Agreements.

We believe that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has a particularly important role to play in this respect. It was thanks to the work of its Chairman for the year 2000, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, that a cessation of hostilities and a peace agreement were achieved. The members of the OAU must therefore continue to support the peace process

and to contribute to reconciliation in the Horn of Africa.

My third comment concerns the social situation in the Temporary Security Zone. Wars leave wounds, marks of destruction and manifestations of poverty. We saw all of these in the area monitored by the United Nations Mission, where refugees and displaced persons require care, homes must be built, communications infrastructure repaired and, ultimately, confidence restored. We urge the international donors to contribute generously to the Consolidated Appeals process to meet humanitarian needs for 2002. This is a first step in the process of economic reconstruction following the devastation of war.

I cannot conclude without placing on record my delegation's gratitude to the countries that contribute troops to UNMEE, whose professionalism and readiness to serve were obvious to us on our visit to the region. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the region, Ambassador Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, and the United Nations team in Addis Ababa and Asmara. The success of our work for peace will depend to a great extent on their dedication and efforts.

The President: I thank the representative of Colombia for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Doutriaux (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to welcome you personally, Sir, to the Security Council on the occasion of this important debate and to thank Norway and Ambassador Ole Peter Kolby for having led and organized the recent mission of members of the Security Council to Ethiopia and Eritrea at a particularly timely moment in the completion of the peace process between those two countries.

The Ambassador will shortly make a statement on behalf of the European Union with which France quite clearly associates itself. I would just like to make four comments in my national capacity.

First, the Security Council carried out the mission it set itself by sending a clear message to the two parties. Ethiopia and Eritrea are both fully committed to respecting the forthcoming decision of the Boundary Commission, and we welcome that commitment. They are thus bound to implement all parts of the decision to be announced in late March, in close cooperation with the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Secondly, my country supports the Security Council's resolve to assist both parties in applying the decision of the Boundary Commission, the practical implementation of which we would wish to see as soon as possible. We strongly urge the parties to refrain from taking any unilateral action that could have destabilizing effects in the regions concerned and encourage them to open a dialogue forthwith.

Thirdly, the mission observed on the ground the humanitarian consequences of the conflict for the populations of both countries. France hopes that the new phase of the peace process to begin with the Boundary Commission's decision will permit the lasting reintegration of displaced persons and the ongoing release of all prisoners of war and civilian detainees.

Fourthly, the mission noted the efforts being made by the leaders of religious communities in both countries to develop ties with civil society. France welcomes those initiatives and hopes that they will be followed by other confidence-building measures aimed at reconciling the two countries in all spheres.

Since the signing of the Algiers Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Ethiopia and Eritrea have had the wisdom to respect the ceasefire and security measures imposed in the Temporary Security Zone. The implementation of the decision of the Boundary Commission will open a new phase leading to the final completion of the peace process between the two parties.

France ardently hopes that Ethiopia and Eritrea will be able to seize this opportunity for their peoples, who aspire to lasting peace and the continuation of reconstruction and economic development programmes conducted by the international agencies, the importance of which the Council was able fully to assess on its mission to the region.

France will make its contribution to the efforts to be undertaken by the Security Council in coming weeks to draft a resolution defining the role that UNMEE will continue to play in the demarcation process, aimed at implementing the mission's recommendations, which we fully endorse.

The President: I thank the representative of France for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): It is an honour, Sir, to have you chair this meeting of the Council this morning. It is also a reflection of the commitment of Norway to Africa, in particular the Horn of Africa.

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the leadership of Ambassador Kolby during the Council mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia, and to thank him and all his colleagues in the Norwegian delegation. Ambassador Kolby's wise approach, skill and dedication in leading the mission, and in conveying to both parties the views of the Council at this important juncture, were greatly appreciated by all members of the mission.

I would also like to thank everyone in the Secretariat who was involved, including in the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and everyone in the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) for their work in support of the mission. Finally, it is also right to thank the leadership of both Governments for their hospitality and support throughout the mission.

My delegation associates itself fully with the statement that Spain will make shortly on behalf of the European Union. The report of the Council mission makes a number of observations that Ambassador Kolby detailed earlier, and my delegation fully supports all the observations and recommendations in the report. Therefore, I would like to focus on just a few points.

During the mission, it was quite clear from our meetings with political and religious leaders, the United Nations country teams, representatives of the World Bank and civil society and non-governmental organizations in both countries that the focus must now turn towards the future, including the long-term economic development of both Ethiopia and Eritrea. For far too long, both countries have suffered from food insecurity and underdevelopment. In addition to the immediate suffering brought about by conflict, the war absorbed meagre national resources, with devastating impact on the populations of both countries.

The fact that both Governments have committed themselves to putting that past behind them, to building a peaceful future through implementation of the determination of the Boundary Commission and to focusing on the pressing humanitarian and development needs of their people is to be strongly commended. It is our sincere hope that both parties may see beyond their current differences to the myriad advantages that neighbourly relations offer the respective peoples, particularly in the border areas, where normal life cannot be suspended indefinitely. These two peoples and these two countries have suffered enough. Wisdom is now putting their past divisions behind them.

It is quite clear that the determination of the Boundary Commission should be implemented quickly, in a coordinated and orderly fashion. When signing the Algiers Agreements, both parties rightly recognized the assistance that the United Nations can offer in that process. We strongly encourage both parties to cooperate fully with UNMEE in developing, as quickly as possible, a common understanding of the steps to be taken and to elaborate the appropriate institutional arrangements to ensure that stability prevails and that further human suffering is minimized. In so doing, we strongly urge them to accord maximum cooperation to UNMEE, particularly regarding the security arrangements. Clearly, it will be important that the separation of forces, as achieved by the Temporary Security Zone, continue. We encourage the international community to take on its corresponding obligations to support and encourage that process.

It is widely recognized that the demarcation process will require a massive demining effort. While primary responsibility for this task lies with the parties, we would support the Secretary-General's considering what practical role UNMEE could play to expedite this work. After all, it is clear under the Algiers Agreement that UNMEE's mandate will not be completed until such time as demarcation is complete. Ireland is prepared to consider any recommendations regarding the UNMEE mandate that implementation of the Boundary Commission decision will necessitate.

We warmly commend the dedication of the men and women working with UNMEE and their contribution to the peace process. In particular, I would like to emphasize Ireland's full support for the untiring efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Legwaila, and the Force Commander, and we encourage the parties to cooperate fully with them in the coming period.

Finally, I would like to reaffirm Ireland's support for and friendship with both Eritrea and Ethiopia. The presence of more than 200 Irish troops at UNMEE and

our long-term commitment to development in the region illustrate our confidence that both parties will take this historic opportunity to turn away from a difficult past and work together towards a better future for their peoples.

The President: I thank the representative of Ireland for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) *(spoke in French)*: Thank you, Sir, for presiding over the Council this morning, at a moment when we are discussing an important problem — that of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Like the others, I should like to express the gratitude of Bulgaria for the important role played by Norway in the Council's efforts to bring about a settlement of this conflict. The leadership of Ambassador Kolby in the mission was remarkable. We warmly thank him and his associates for the extraordinary work they have done.

Bulgaria associates itself with the statement that will be made shortly on behalf of the European Union by the Ambassador of Spain, but I should like to make some brief remarks on behalf of my country.

My country welcomes the results of the mission and believes that it has fulfilled its task of preparing for the next stage of the peace process, which should come at the end of March 2002, after the announcement of the definitive juridical decision of the Boundary Commission. We note with satisfaction the public announcements by the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and the President of Eritrea during the mission, reaffirming that the decisions by the Boundary Commission would be final and binding. These announcements allow us to hope that the two parties will seriously seek a durable solution to their territorial dispute.

Now it is fundamental to focus the attention of the international community and the Security Council on the importance of the application of the Commission's forthcoming decision. The Council should make its own contribution. We believe that the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) must continue to carry out its mandate throughout the period of implementation of all the commitments deriving from the decision of the Boundary Commission. The Temporary Security Zone should remain in place throughout the demarcation process.

The problem of demining is crucial not only for the success of the demarcation process but also for the return of refugees. While the essential responsibility for the task lies with the two parties, as indicated by the Algiers Agreements, it is important that UNMEE provide all the necessary support so that the demining can be a success in terms of allowing the demarcation process to be completed.

Bulgaria encourages both Governments to continue to promote mutual trust and the establishment of a favourable climate. We welcome the mission's fruitful meetings with the religious leaders of the two countries, and we emphasize the positive effect of those meetings on reconciliation and rapprochement between the two peoples.

My delegation is deeply concerned at the grave humanitarian consequences of the conflict. That conflict has given rise to massive population displacements and a great increase in the need for emergency food aid. The international community must make all its resources available to ease the crisis. We support the report's recommendations in that regard and call on Member States to make generous contributions to the consolidated appeals for 2002. My delegation welcomes the close and productive cooperation among humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations, which is a true example of partnership.

Let me conclude by paying tribute to the civilian and military men and women of UNMEE for their professionalism and commitment. During our visit, we were impressed by the remarkable results that UNMEE has attained and by the Mission's contribution to the peace process. My country is grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Legwaila, for his tireless efforts to help create conditions conducive to the establishment of lasting peace in the area. I reaffirm my delegation's full support for the efforts he is making in difficult conditions.

The President: I thank the representative of Bulgaria for his kind words.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic is pleased, Mr. Minister, to see you presiding over this open meeting of the Security Council to discuss the report of the Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea. We appreciate the contribution of your friendly

country, which provided the facilities needed to ensure the mission's success.

Let me also express our profound appreciation for the enormous efforts of Ambassador Ole Peter Kolby, who led the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea with success. We listened carefully to his presentation of the mission's detailed report to the Council.

The Syrian Arab Republic agrees with previous speakers that this was a timely mission, taking place soon before the decision of the Boundary Commission that will demarcate the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea by the end of this month. My delegation feels that the message sent by the mission to both parties was a direct reflection of the interest of the international community and of the Security Council in reaching a peaceful settlement of the situation of conflict between the two countries. That conflict has cost thousands of lives and has displaced many innocent civilians on both sides.

We are confident that peace based on justice and on the principles of international law will ultimately lead to building relations founded on equality and mutual respect between the two countries. Such a peace would also help promote friendship and development between the two neighbouring peoples.

Syria welcomes the possibility of a legal settlement on the boundary in the near future, in accordance with the Algiers Agreements. We commend the leaders of the two countries for their statements confirming their readiness to accept the decision of the Boundary Commission. That demonstrates the commitment of the two parties to the peace process.

My delegation pays tribute here to the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) for the role it is playing, in cooperation with the two parties, to improve the living conditions of the population, especially in the Temporary Security Zone. In that regard, my delegation is confident that the two parties will fully cooperate with UNMEE in working towards a common understanding on ways and means to implement the forthcoming decision of the Boundary Commission.

The report of the Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea is comprehensive, transparently reporting on all the mission's activities. We believe that the observations and recommendations set out in part IV of the report deserve the full attention of the Council and of the two neighbouring countries. In particular, my delegation supports the mission's appeal to the guarantors, the facilitators and the witnesses of the peace process, the Organization of African Unity and the friends of Eritrea and Ethiopia to continue to intensify their contacts with the authorities of both countries, in order to promote a constructive dialogue with the aim of opening a new page in the history of their relations. We also support the recommendations urging donors to respond generously to the United Nations Trust Fund to Support the Peace Process established for the purpose of promoting assistance projects.

We believe that the renewal of the mandate of UNMEE for a further six-month period, on which a decision will soon be taken, would help strengthen stability and peace in the region.

Over the years, the Horn of Africa has endured fierce conflicts and disastrous situations. Consequently, the international community is duty-bound to make further efforts to put an end to those conflicts and those disastrous situations by working towards stability and development. Here, we are very optimistic about the possibility of settling the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which would be a first step towards settling other problems in that important and sensitive region.

The President: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Diallo (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): Your presence here today, Mr. Minister, once again reflects your country's continued great interest in questions affecting the African continent. My delegation is very pleased to see you presiding over this meeting on the situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and even more so because your country and you yourself have devoted special attention to addressing the crisis there. My delegation welcomes the many efforts that have been made towards a fair settlement of the conflict.

We are duly awaiting the forthcoming announcement of the decision of the independent Boundary Commission, which is responsible for demarcation of the border between the two countries. We welcome recent statements by the two parties reaffirming that that decision will be final and binding. But the period following the announcement of the decision could be fraught with uncertainties, and the

necessary measures must be adopted to ensure that the parties meet their commitments, with a view to bringing about the peaceful completion of subsequent phases. In that regard, a mechanism is quickly needed to facilitate the demining of the area so that the Boundary Commission can proceed without delay to the demarcation and delimitation of the border.

While the demining operation falls under the responsibility of the two States, it seems clear that, due to a lack of financial resources, it cannot be carried out effectively without outside assistance. We believe that this task must be entrusted to the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), on the basis of the "no exit without strategy" principle. We are convinced, Mr. President, that your country, which has already made so many diplomatic and financial efforts to bring the two parties closer, will play a leading role in this regard.

Moreover, my delegation appeals to the various actors of the peace process to further strengthen their relations with the authorities of the two countries to promote a constructive dialogue that is capable of strengthening confidence-building measures.

My delegation is convinced that the effective implementation of the Algiers Agreement will not only contribute to bringing about a lasting settlement of the conflict, but will also allow, we hope, the traditional ties between the Ethiopian and Eritrean peoples to be strengthened. We encourage the donor community to continue its efforts for the urgent mobilization of the means necessary to cover the enormous humanitarian needs resulting from this fratricidal conflict.

I wish to say, in conclusion, that the Guinean Government fully supports the recommendations of the Security Council mission report and wishes to express its thanks to Ambassador Kolby for the effectiveness with which he conducted the mission.

The President: I thank the representative of Guinea for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Harrison (United Kingdom): I first join others in welcoming you, Mr. President, as you preside over this meeting.

The delegation of Spain will be speaking later on behalf of the European Union. My delegation naturally endorses what it will say. I would just like to make one or two points of detail.

First, my delegation would like to join others in congratulating Ambassador Kolby for the way he led the recent mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea and also to congratulate Ambassador Legwaila and the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) on their tireless work.

It is obvious that the decision shortly to be announced by the Boundary Commission will have considerable importance for the future of the peace process and the stability of the region. As the Boundary Commission's decision grows nearer, we believe that it is important for the international community to engage more deeply in the peace process, particularly the guarantors of the peace process and regional organizations, including the Organization of African Unity.

But a second point about the Boundary Commission's ruling is that it will not be the end of the peace process. Indeed, the current arrangements on the ground will have to remain in place and the outstanding obstacles to the peace process, including the areas of Eritrean non-compliance, will need to be resolved. The demarcation process itself may not be completed until 2004. But once the Boundary Commission's position is known, it will be important to inject early momentum into that demarcation process. The demining that will be needed to allow demarcation to take place will be a major undertaking, and it may prove to be beyond the capacity of the two parties. So the Council may need to consider whether to extend UNMEE's role to cover this area of activity at the renewal of the mandate in a few days' time.

Finally, I should like to say that we welcome the meeting of the religious leaders of the two countries. We believe that events like that can only help the normalization of bilateral relations at all levels, which is so important for the peace process.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kind words.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your delegation on organizing today's meeting and on giving us the opportunity to comment on the report of the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Before going into the substantive issues, I would also like to congratulate Ambassador Peter Kolby for his excellent leadership of the mission and for

introducing the report today. Norway attaches great importance to the Ethiopia-Eritrea peace process, as has been demonstrated by the significant contribution it made in financing the work of the Boundary Commission. I would also like to thank the Government of Norway for providing us with the aircraft which facilitated our mission. Our thanks also go to the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea for their very warm hospitality and, of course, to Ambassador Legwaila, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and the members of the Security Council Secretariat for preparing the mission and for the facilities provided to the members of the mission.

The mission to the two countries has been extremely useful, as it has allowed members of the Council to have first-hand information on the activities of UNMEE on the ground. The meetings with the United Nations country teams and the diplomatic corps in both countries, as well as with the religious leaders, provided us with insight into the underlying complexities of the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict.

We commend the report of the mission, which faithfully reflects the substance of the meetings and contains a set of observations and recommendations to which we fully subscribe.

We believe that the mission to the two countries was indeed very timely and opportune, especially in the light of the much-awaited decision of the Boundary Commission later this month.

As we are entering a crucial stage in the peace process, we welcome the commitments with regard to the upcoming decisions of the Boundary Commission that the leadership of both Ethiopia and Eritrea reiterated during our mission to the two countries. The commitment of the two sides to abide by the decisions of the Boundary Commission as per their undertakings under the Algiers Agreement constitutes a very important step in forging a sustained peace between the countries.

As highlighted in the mission report, we discussed with the two parties the various steps relating to the implementation of the decisions of the Boundary Commission. Once the decisions are known later this month, it will be extremely important for the two sides to sit together with UNMEE to discuss ways and means of implementing them. We would like to mention that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Legwaila, and his team, who have our full trust and support, will have a very important role to play in the months ahead. To ensure smooth implementation of the decisions of the Boundary Commission, the guarantors, facilitators and witnesses of the Ethiopian-Eritrean peace process should continue to use their good offices to urge the two sides to live up to their obligations under the Algiers Agreement.

Norway, as we can see, attaches great importance to this file of the Council, and we would like to suggest that Norway also use its good offices to complement Ambassador Legwaila's work of ensuring that the two parties implement the decisions of the Boundary Commission.

Once the decisions of the Commission are known, it will be of utmost importance for the two sides to refrain from any unilateral action that could have negative repercussions on the peace process. We highlighted this aspect during our mission to the two countries and we do likewise today. Hence, all issues pertaining to the movement of population or troops should be addressed only through dialogue within the framework to be established by the United Nations through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Legwaila.

During our mission, we had the opportunity to visit a school where children's awareness of landmines is being raised. Indeed, anti-personnel landmines continue to hinder the proper return of internally displaced persons. When we met with the leadership of the two countries, we urged them to live up to their commitments under the Algiers Agreement to cooperate fully in ensuring an expeditious demining process, which will take us to the demarcation stage.

There is no doubt that the continued presence of UNMEE in Ethiopia and Eritrea will be of extreme importance until the demarcation and delimitation process is successfully completed. My delegation is ready to explore all possibilities that might ensure that the demining required for paving the way for a successful demarcation process is efficiently carried out in a timely manner. It is in this spirit that we would like to approach the draft resolution that would extend the mandate of UNMEE. We are also ready to consider a change in the mandate of UNMEE to include demining activities.

The President: I thank the representative of Mauritius for his kind words addressed to me.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Norway.

I should like to make a couple of comments. First, I would like to commend the Security Council for agreeing to send a mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea at this important stage of the peace process. This mission underlines the strong, supportive commitment of the international community and its desire to understand the parties and engage them in a constructive dialogue on the way forward.

I would also like to commend the parties for their commitment to implement fully the Algiers Agreements. I met personally with the leaders of the two countries in Addis Ababa and Asmara in the days immediately before the visit by the Security Council mission. I praised both countries for having opted for an international legal mechanism for resolving the conflict by peaceful means. I also commended them for giving the United Nations such a central role in implementing the Boundary Commission's decision.

A final settlement, based on the forthcoming decision of the Boundary Commission, is about to be reached. Ethiopia and Eritrea, with the assistance of the international community, will be able to embark on and again concentrate all their efforts on their economic and social development, with the support of the world community. With the peaceful resolution of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the enhancement of peace and stability in the rest of the Horn of Africa could also gain momentum.

On the eve of the decision of the Commission, the message from the international community is unambiguous: the United Nations and the international community will continue their support to help implement the practical and physical demarcation of the border, thus consolidating the achievements of peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Eritrea. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Seyoum (Eritrea): I am grateful for the opportunity that has been given to my delegation to participate in the Council's open discussion this morning on the agenda item on the situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia. My delegation is delighted to see Norway, the very country that led the Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea at the end of February 2002, presiding over this organ of the United Nations for the current month of March. I wish to begin, therefore, by congratulating the presidency both for its indispensable guidance and for a job well done in leading the purposeful mission to our troubled region.

At the outset, my delegation wishes to thank the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea for its extensive report of 27 February 2002, contained in document S/2002/205, which is under consideration at this meeting. Indeed, the report reflects the success of the mission and my delegation shares the joy of this remarkable success. My delegation notes with satisfaction that the mission was able to visit a great many places and meet with a great many people in a very short time.

My delegation wishes to thank the Security Council members for the visit that they undertook to my country. This was an eloquent demonstration of the goodwill and commitment of the international community to the peace process between my country and Ethiopia. We are thankful for your continued support, Mr. President. We notice with pride that the mission met with His Excellency Mr. Isaias Afwerki, the President of the State of Eritrea, in Asmara, and was able to adequately address many, if not all, of the issues directly related to the peace process. Having given that assurance, therefore, I do not wish to repeat myself. However, I feel duty-bound to say that I will re-emphasize a couple of points later in my statement.

My delegation notes with great interest that the main focus of the mission was to create awareness of the importance of looking to the future — looking to the crucial tasks to be carried out following the Boundary Commission's decision later this month. My Government highly commends the Council for its wisdom, and could not agree more with the proposal for the swift implementation of the Boundary Commission's decision, as stated in paragraph 35 (*a*) of the report. In this regard, I am pleased to report to the Council that, on 25 February 2002, my Government responded positively, to the Commission's request for Eritrea's permission for the overflights for aerial photography.

The people and the Government of Eritrea are looking forward to a bright future. Their optimism was well expressed by President Isaias Afwerki, when he addressed the mission on 24 February in Asmara. He said,

> "My optimism is based on the hope that the Boundary Commission's decision, in accordance with the principle of the sanctity of colonial boundaries — a fundamental principle that cannot be tampered with on this continent — will shortly set to rest the underlying causes of this unfortunate war. If, indeed, it was misunderstanding about location of the colonial boundary that caused the conflict, both countries should soon be able to move beyond the current atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust and to restore mutually beneficial bonds of good neighbourliness between their two sisterly peoples. Under such circumstances, demarcation based on the colonial boundaries should not be expected to pose serious problems."

The international community has watched the Eritrean people endure a struggle for peace for over 30 years. They thought they had found it in 1991, when the war between their country and Ethiopia ended for the good of the two peoples. Unfortunately, that peace was cut short by another round of conflict in 1998, arising out of a territorial claim. That is the conflict whose lasting resolution the Security Council and other partners are engaged in helping to bring about.

A remarkable woman of inspiration, Helen Keller, once said, "I do not want the peace that passeth understanding. I want the understanding which bringeth peace". This time, the Eritrean people are looking not for a peace which is merely the absence of war, but for a lasting peace in abundance. This time, it cannot be a "hit or miss" business; it should be a "hit", with pure justice. The Eritrean people have been longing for that precious peace for many years. I fervently hope that they find it this time, and keep it forever. We should not fail them.

Allow me now to underline two issues that President Isaias Afwerki raised in his meeting with you, Mr. President, and with the members of the mission, in Asmara. These two issues deserve the utmost attention because they both have humanitarian implications.

First, as members of the Council are aware, the Temporary Security Zone, which is the cornerstone of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of 18 June 2000, could not be established due to Ethiopia's refusal to redeploy its troops, in violation of article 14 of the Agreement. As a result of that violation, more than 60,000 Eritrean civilians remain stranded in makeshift camps to this day, making it impossible for them to return to their homes and villages. My delegation is thankful and pleased to note, in paragraph 32 of the report, that the mission was able to visit some 5,000 of those internally displaced persons around the Senafe area.

The mission was witness to the conditions that those men, women and children are living in. It saw them and talked to them. They communicated their horrible conditions in a very powerful way. I believe the mission came back convinced that their living conditions are unacceptable. We should send them home to their villages. It would be unjust to continue to keep them in those camps. I appeal to the Council and the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) to help us create the conditions for those people to return.

Secondly, article 8 of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement provides for prompt demining activities by both parties

> "with a view to creating the conditions necessary for the deployment of the Peacekeeping Mission, the return of civilian administration and the return of the population as well as the delimitation and demarcation of their common border". (*S/2000/601, annex, art. 8*)

That vital treaty obligation remains unfulfilled by Ethiopia, which, for no justifiable reason, has refused to provide UNMEE with detailed landmine information. Therefore, my delegation cannot help but join the mission in its appeal to Ethiopia to submit detailed landmine information. Provision of that information assumes added urgency today because the task of expeditious demarcation — and ultimate peace between the countries — will depend on rapid completion of mine clearance, especially along the common boundary.

We note with deep concern the Security Council's appeal for an orderly transfer of administration and for population returns and its caution against unilateral action without urging Ethiopia to respect its treaty

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

obligations. Ethiopia has already violated those obligations and has frustrated the implementation of the Agreements by dilatory tactics such as those of the last two years. My Government would simply like to flag the practicality of that intention, as we already know of one party's unilateral violation of prior agreements. My delegation begs the Council's understanding in this matter.

While I am on the issue of landmines, my Government wishes to thank all those who contributed to the demining project.

I wish to conclude my statement by recalling that the Council is meeting this morning at the eleventh hour in the delivery of the decision of the Boundary Commission. I bring this up not to make it sensational or to add more anxiety, but to share my delegation's optimism and that of the President of Eritrea. The peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia are earnestly waiting for that decision with hope, in anticipation of "opening a new page in the history of their relations" in genuine peace and freedom. In that respect, we cannot agree more with former President Herbert Hoover, who said, "Peace is not made at the Council table or by treaties, but in the hearts of men", and, I would add, women.

Finally, the Government of Eritrea wishes to thank all our partners and the actors in the peace process for their invaluable effort. The same goes to those who contributed to the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of the Delimitation and Demarcation of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Border. My Government appeals to the international community to contribute more to the Trust Fund. The recent announcement of a $1 million contribution by the Government of Norway is most gratifying.

Again, my warmest congratulations to you, Mr. President, on a successful mission.

The President: I thank the representative of Eritrea for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ethiopia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Tessema (Ethiopia): On behalf of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, I would like to express our appreciation to you, Mr. Foreign Minister, for convening this debate and for your delegation's leadership of the Council's mission to our region. We are doubly gratified to see you here after you honoured us by visiting our capital a few days prior to the Council's mission. We also want to express our special thanks to Ambassador Kolby for his effective leadership in facilitating the Security Council's mission to both Ethiopia and Eritrea.

My Government appreciated the recent visit by the Security Council mission to my country. We are convinced that it will contribute immensely to moving the peace process forward and to resolving some of the outstanding issues that might hamper the full implementation of the Algiers Agreement and the upcoming decision of the Boundary Commission. We believe that the visit has accorded Council members a first-hand opportunity to appreciate the concerns raised repeatedly by my Government.

I would like once again to highlight some of the outstanding issues that were raised by my Prime Minister during the Council's mission and that need to be resolved before the announcement of the Boundary Commission's decision.

First, the Temporary Security Zone established by the Algiers Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities to serve as a buffer zone separating the two armies has to be fully demilitarized and should remain so until the demarcation process is completed. We have serious concerns that the Temporary Security Zone is not fully demilitarized. It continues to be infiltrated by regular army in the name of militia and police. The Security Council should see to it that this issue is resolved sooner rather than later.

Secondly, Ethiopia also believes that the status of forces agreement, which governs the presence of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), should be signed. Each party is required to sign the agreement with the United Nations to formalize UNMEE's legal presence in their respective countries. It should be recalled that Ethiopia signed such a status of forces agreement about a year ago, long before the deadline. Eritrea has not yet singed the agreement.

Thirdly, Ethiopia has continued to ensure that UNMEE enjoys freedom of movement, including within the 15-kilometer area adjacent to the southern boundary of the Temporary Security Zone. We would like to see UNMEE be granted the same right by the other party, a right that is needed for the physical demarcation of the boundary. Defiance and denial of

that right have caused serious problems in the past and remain of major concern to my Government.

Fourthly, on the point reiterated by some Council members regarding direct high-altitude flights for the United Nations, a proposal was submitted by UNMEE to the two parties. Ethiopia asked for a two-minute deviation east or west of the proposed route, agreeing to all other possibilities. We hope that issue will also be resolved once and for all with Council consultation with the other party.

We are now at a very critical stage in the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as has been reiterated by many Council members. We are looking forward to welcoming the judicial and impartial verdict of the Boundary Commission, to be announced during the latter part of this month. We would not want to see any of the outstanding issues or non-compliance with the Algiers Agreement jeopardize the peace process or the implementation of the forthcoming decision of the Boundary Commission.

We believe that the decision of the Boundary Commission should not be under any political influence, nor should its outcome be politicized, in whatever form, by any third party. We believe that the decision of the Boundary Commission ought to be a judicial decision, with full transparency and void of any political considerations or pressures. My Government has so far implemented and observed the Algiers Agreement and is committed to the full implementation of such an outcome.

The President: I thank the representative of Ethiopia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Spain. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am delighted, Sir, to see you presiding over the Council today.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country members of the European Economic Area — Iceland — align themselves with this statement.

The European Union (EU) wishes to express its appreciation to the Norwegian presidency for having convened this public debate on the report of the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea. We welcome the report and the opportunity it provides for Member States to share their assessments as we enter this crucial period of the ongoing peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The European Union reiterates its full support for the Peace Agreement signed in Algiers on 12 December 2000 as well for as the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities signed in Algiers on 18 June of the same year. In this context, we look forward to the border delimitation determination by the Boundary Commission. The EU welcomes recent statements by the parties reaffirming that the decision of the Boundary Commission is final and binding, and the commitment of each to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the other party, in accordance with the Algiers Agreement.

The announcement by the Boundary Commission of its decision in the next few weeks will complete the first phase of the ongoing peace process. The EU expects the parties to ensure that the process of implementation of the demarcation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border will commence immediately and proceed expeditiously, in a coordinated manner, while stability is maintained in all areas affected by the decision.

The EU expresses its full support for the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Legwaila. Next week the Security Council will consider the extension of UNMEE's mandate. We look forward in this regard to the recommendations of the Secretary-General, with a view to providing an overall framework for the implementation phase and for the appropriate role of UNMEE. We would recall the pivotal role to be played by the United Nations, as set out in the Algiers Agreement, in implementing the decision of the Boundary Commission, and we urge the parties to cooperate fully with UNMEE in implementing that decision and to keep communications open with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General during this crucial period.

The EU shares the view of the Security Council mission that, in order to facilitate the implementation phase, the institutional framework for the peace process will need to be developed further, particularly through appropriate strengthening of the Military Coordination Commission, as well as through other mechanisms based on dialogue between the parties and their full cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The EU stands ready to offer what assistance it can.

The EU wishes to emphasize that, according to the Algiers agreements, the mandate of the United Nations peacekeeping mission will end when the process of delimitation and demarcation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border has been completed. Accordingly, we attach the utmost importance to the continuation of the arrangements for the separation of the forces, as achieved by the establishment of the Temporary Security Zone. It is equally important that, in order to maintain stability, the parties refrain from any unilateral actions, including movements of population and troops.

Demarcation is a physical process that must necessarily take place on the ground. The border region involved in the dispute remains heavily mined, which poses a major threat to the population and to the United Nations personnel operating in the area. Demining is an essential preliminary step to border demarcation. In this regard, the EU reminds the parties of their primary responsibility and urges them to cooperate fully to ensure expeditious demining. UNMEE's mandate should be adjusted, as necessary, to allow it to play a full and appropriate role in the demarcation process.

In the context of confidence-building measures, we call on the parties immediately to release and return unconditionally all the remaining prisoners of war and all those detained as a result of the armed conflict. It is also important to ensure a sustainable reintegration of refugees, internally displaced persons and demobilized soldiers. The EU calls on the parties urgently to resolve all other outstanding issues, including the full freedom of movement of UNMEE.

The demarcation of the border and the implementation of confidence-building measures are key steps towards the normalization of relations between these neighbouring countries. The overall objective of the peace process is reconciliation, reconstruction and development, for the benefit of their peoples. The EU calls on the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea to move towards normalization and lasting reconciliation.

We are encouraged by the joint meetings of religious leaders held on 14 and 15 February in Asmara and Addis Ababa. We stress the particular importance of promoting cross-border contacts at the local level, rebuilding community relations, and the role that women can play in this regard.

The consolidation of peace between both countries will contribute to relaunching the process of regional cooperation and integration. Regional cooperation is of vital importance for stable and sustainable development in the Horn of Africa, which remains an area of particular concern for the EU. We note in this regard the signing of the protocol on the establishment of an early warning and early response mechanism for conflicts at the ninth Inter-Governmental Authority on Development Summit, held on 11 January.

To conclude, the European Union, as a witness and co-signatory of the Algiers Comprehensive Peace Agreement, remains committed to continuing its support of the peace process, particularly through the Special Representative of the Presidency, Senator Serri. We will continue to provide assistance to the populations affected by the conflict and by other humanitarian disasters, such as the current drought. With continued progress in the peace process, the European Union wishes to support peace-building, reconstruction and development and to contribute to the launching of a dialogue on confidence-building measures and efforts towards normalization, cooperation on all aspects of mutual interest and lasting reconciliation between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The President: I thank the representative of Spain for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Netherlands. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Van den Berg (Netherlands): I congratulate the Security Council on a timely and a successful mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea and I thank it for its comprehensive report. During the mission, many issues were raised and discussed with a variety of actors across the spectrum in both countries and we support

the observations and recommendations made in the report.

The Netherlands also supports and associates itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

We feel that today's meeting of the Council is important because the peace process in Ethiopia and Eritrea is nearing a critical moment with the forthcoming decision of the Boundary Commission. We welcome the fact that the parties have consistently made clear that they will accept the decision of the Boundary Commission as final and binding.

We feel that the formal presentation of the decision of the Boundary Commission should be accompanied by a setting and manner that justify the importance of the decision. After all, with the delimitation of the boundary, it is for the parties to turn away from the past and to look towards the future. We therefore sincerely hope that this milestone event will take place in such a way that Ethiopians, Eritreans and, in fact, the whole world can witness this crucial moment and that it will provide leaders of both countries with a unique opportunity to restate their solemn commitment to the peace process. The international community can then respond by expressing its full support for both countries.

During its membership of the Council, the Netherlands paid a great deal of attention to the issue of exit strategies for peacekeeping operations. Exit should be based on the successful fulfilment of a mission's mandate and therefore be linked to a clear objective. In the case of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), that objective is clear. The Algiers Agreements link the termination of UNMEE with the completion of the demarcation of the border.

Ultimately, it is the implementation that will conclude the peace process. It is essential that the start of demarcation begin immediately after the delivery of the decision. Implementing the decision of the Boundary Commission is, however, an extensive logistical and managerial process that cannot simply be left to the Commission. It is therefore essential that the United Nations support this process from the beginning. Here, we see an important role for UNMEE in providing the required logistical and managerial support for the demarcation and in establishing the necessary conditions, such as through demining operations along the border. Attention should be paid to possible transboundary movement of populations and internally displaced persons, the transfer of authority over territory and many other issues. We feel that all of this should be thoroughly discussed as soon as possible and decided upon by all parties concerned. The outcome of these discussions should be reflected in an adjusted mandate for UNMEE. It is also important that we have realistic budgetary estimates available on the costs of the demarcation process.

Finally, I would like to assure you, Sir, that your recommendation to, inter alia, the friends of Eritrea and Ethiopia in paragraph 36 (a) of the report of the Council's mission that they continue to intensify their contacts with the authorities of both countries will not be left unheard. As the Chairman of the Group of Friends of Eritrea and Ethiopia, I can assure the Council that the Group of Friends will strive to keep the dialogue going in order to do our part in achieving the ultimate goal of the peace process: full and normalized relations between both countries.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): At the outset, my delegation would like to welcome Mr. Jan Petersen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, and to congratulate Norway on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. Allow me as well to extend my congratulations to Ambassador Aguilar Zinser of Mexico and his team for their excellent work last month.

Following the Norwegian practice, I will keep my remarks brief.

Japan welcomes the comprehensive report of the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea, headed by Ambassador Ole Peter Kolby of Norway. The report itself demonstrates the success of the mission on the eve of the final and binding decision of the Boundary Commission. Japan hopes that the views gained by the members of the Security Council during their visit to the field will be reflected in the upcoming consideration of the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE).

We commend Ethiopia and Eritrea for choosing to resolve their differences through an international conflict-resolution mechanism and welcome recent statements by both sides reaffirming that the decision of the Boundary Commission is final and binding. In the expectation that all necessary steps for the implementation of the Boundary Commission's decision will commence immediately following the Commission's announcement, Japan welcomes this positive development and hopes that our contribution of approximately $1 million to the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of the Delimitation and Demarcation of the Ethiopia/Eritrea Border will be utilized effectively. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to both parties to refrain from any action that could have a destabilizing effect, including the movement of peoples as well as troops.

As stated in the report of the Security Council mission, the successful implementation of the Boundary Commission's decision will depend in large part on the demining of the border area. This is also crucial for confidence-building in order to resolve localized disputes and rebuild community relations, particularly through the promotion of cross-border contacts at the local level. In view of the importance of mine clearance, the Government of Japan has decided to earmark approximately $560,000 of its contribution to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action for the project in the Temporary Security Zone.

Let me conclude by commenting on Security Council missions in general. Security Council missions to the field can be a useful tool, as demonstrated by this latest mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea. In order to ensure that future missions are fruitful, Japan believes it worthwhile to consider establishing criteria for sending missions and ensuring transparency with regard to budgetary basis.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan for his kind words addressed to me.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Kolby, head of the Security Council mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia, to respond to the comments made.

Mr. Kolby: I should like to make just a few brief remarks.

With the Boundary Commission decision and its implementation soon before us, I believe that the most important thing now will be for all of us to look forward to the important steps ahead. The Ambassador of the Netherlands referred to some of these steps. I think that only in this way can we proceed in a constructive manner.

Secondly, I would draw the Council's attention to the fact that the two leaders, in their remarks to the press after our meetings, characterized the mission as both constructive and timely, and I think these remarks were repeated by the two countries here today. We would like to build further on this foundation in the Council.

Regarding the outstanding issues, the position of the Council has been clearly expressed on several occasions, in the presidential statement adopted in January and reiterated in the report of the mission. These are well-known requirements, and they should be adhered to.

Finally, I would like to underline the very strong, supportive environment confirmed through the mission to the two countries. The international community will stand firmly behind the parties in the implementation of the Algiers Agreements, including the implementation of the Boundary Commission's decision. As we have heard today, I think the Council remains strongly committed to contribute to the completion of the peace process.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.